

**ABSTRACT**

An expandable tissue supporting device of the present invention employs ductile hinges at selected points in the expandable device. When expansion forces are applied to the device as a whole, the ductile hinges concentrate expansion stresses and strains in small well defined areas. The expandable medical device including ductile hinges  
5 provides the advantages of low expansion force requirements, relatively thick walls which are radio-opaque, improved crimping properties, high crush strength, reduced elastic recoil after implantation, and control of strain to a desired level. The expandable tissue supporting device includes a plurality of elongated beams arranged in a cylindrical device and connected together by a plurality of ductile hinges. Although  
10 many ductile hinge configurations are possible, the ductile hinges preferably have a substantially constant hinge cross sectional area which is smaller than a beam cross sectional area such that as the device is expanded from a first diameter to a second diameter, the ductile hinges experience plastic deformation while the beams are not plastically deformed.